



## Is an Epidemic in Your Home?

Asthma is a national epidemic and the most common chronic illness for children. Twice as many preschool children today have asthma than in 1980. Asthma is the primary cause of school absenteeism, emergency room visits and hospital admissions for children. This disease has serious consequences when uncontrolled: asthma-related deaths have tripled for children under age 18.

Because diagnosis can be complicated, many children with asthma aren't identified quickly. Asthma and allergy symptoms both can include coughing, sneezing, wheezing, and runny nose. Nearly 90 percent of children with asthma also have allergies. Symptoms from colds, respiratory infections and bronchitis can mirror asthma warning signs which may also include:

- **Physical:** fatigue, hunched shoulders, sweating, trouble sleeping, chest tightness, difficulty exercising, dark circles under eyes and nasal flaring (nostril size increasing with breathing)
- **Emotional:** wanting to be alone, restless, grumpy, difficulty talking or concentrating

If a child exhibits asthma symptoms, a physician should evaluate the child. Children significantly improve in lung function when asthma is diagnosed early and treated with long-term controller medications. Delaying proper treatment can permanently damage bronchial tissues and even be fatal. Don't wait to treat hoping symptoms will disappear—75 percent of adults with asthma developed it as children. Asthma symptoms in children can diminish as they age, but asthma is a genetic condition that can be triggered at anytime and cannot be completely cured.

Your CIGNA Benefits include the Well Aware Program for Better Health Asthma Program®. If you or a family member has been diagnosed with asthma, call 1-800-894-0086 to enroll in this program and receive information and resources about this condition.

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Content: Cigna HealthCare of Arizona

Client Manager: T. Thomas

